

Tale *Feathers*

Nov 2002

Volume 69
Number 9

So, What IS the St. Louis Audubon Society, Anyway?

YOUR St. Louis Audubon Society-There's More Than You Imagined

Tuesday, November 19, 2002 at 7:30 p.m. at the Powder Valley Nature Center.

Yes, as most people know, we're big on birds. But what does that really mean, and is there more? Did you know that by October 1st, we had already presented educational programs to over 600 students this school year, or that we offer programs as diverse as birds and bats, owls and rivers? Come hear, see, and feel just what we're all about-from field trips, to bird monitoring, to classroom programs, to conservation advocacy, and much, much more. Meet the people that make it happen and find out if there's something interesting for you.

Whether you're new, been around for years, or haven't even joined, we guarantee you'll learn something new about St. Louis Audubon!

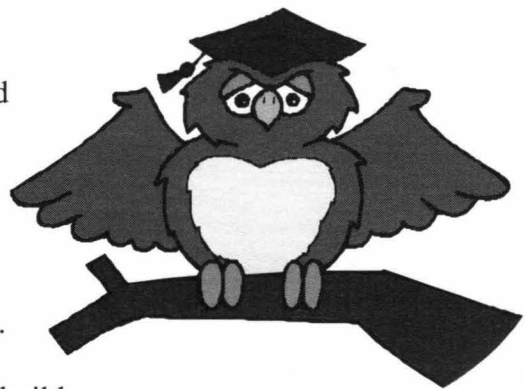
Open to all-members or not.

Refreshments will be available, and door prizes, too!!

From the intersection of Interstates 44 & 270, take Watson Rd. to Geyer Rd. Turn north on Geyer for 200 yards. to Cragwold Rd. Go west on Cragwold for 1 mi. to nature center entrance on right.

Follow drive to parking lot. Enter building through left entrance.

Questions, call Mitch Leachman at 314-739-5112.



Inside

Conservation Report

Holiday Open House

West Nile Virus

Bird-N-Learn

St. Louis Audubon Society

Volunteers

Mix and Mingle....

At the next newsletter mailing party! The date for the next party is Nov. 22 at 7:30 p.m. The place is board member Sharon Nickl's home in Kirkwood. Call Anne Bolte at 314-832-0938 (ambolte@swbell.net) for directions. Come join in the fun!!!

Conservation Report

Sue Gustafson

Join us for the annual **Conservation Forum** sponsored by the University of Missouri - St. Louis on Thursday, November 14, 2002, 5:30 - 9:30 pm in the Living World Building at the St. Louis Zoo.

This year's program features keynote speaker Dr. Peter Marra, Senior Scientist, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, who will present:

Links between worlds: unraveling migratory connectivity

Program:

5 - 6 pm Registration

5:30 - 6:40 pm Breakout Sessions - Local conservation organizations and researchers, working on both local and international projects, will present a wide range of topics.

St. Louis Audubon will present **"Increasing Conservation Awareness Through Birding"**

6:45 - 7:45 pm Optional box dinner and conservation organization display area open

8 - 8:15 pm Presentation of Conservation Action Award

8:15 - 9:30 pm Keynote Speaker Program

The five breakout sessions will run simultaneously from 5:30 to 6 pm and be repeated from 6:10 to 6:40 pm in the Living World classrooms. Participants are invited to choose two of the five sessions. The evening presentation will be given in Anheuser Busch Auditorium.

Admission is free. Box dinners are available at \$10 each by making a reservation before October 31 with your order (indicate number required and meal choice of turkey, ham, or vegetarian sandwich) and a check sent to: ICTE, UM-St. Louis, Department of Biology, 8001 Natural Bridge Rd, St. Louis, MO 63121-4499. For more information, please contact me at 314-968-8128 or Dr. Patrick Osbourne at 314-516-5219.

NO Fall Birding Festival

Due to scheduling conflicts, Paul Bauer will be unable to conduct the Fall Birding Festival. Look for information on the Spring Birding Festival, April 15th, in upcoming issues of *Tale Feathers*.

Where the Urban Wild Things Are (Were)

Mitch Leachman

One morning just a couple weeks ago, while filling the bird feeders in the tiny wooden corral known as my urban backyard, I was struck by a strange and disturbing sound. It was very much like a chainsaw-actually, it sounded like several!! Being curious, and a little suspicious, I investigated and found abandoned houses and knocked-down trees less than a/ mile from my front door! Returning home, I hastily asked my landlord about the destruction and was told it was for an airport parking lot. A PARKING LOT!! I was devastated! My little wood was going to be a parking lot!

That small, dead-end neighborhood was on the far-end of a wood I had become very fond of since moving to St. Louis two years ago. A seemingly insignificant little square of urban wildness-the 25 acre wood had provided me sights and sounds of all variety of animals, including deer, owls, and even fox. It was always alive, even if just the rustling of leaves in the wind. But how quickly the big machines were changing all that. Trees are simply pushed over by bulldozers. Their trunks cut, stacked, and carted away on flatbeds. The branches, twigs, and shrubs are all fed into a giant grinder that spits out mulch. How painfully ironic one Saturday when a red-tailed hawk alighted on a telephone pole and surveyed the now-open ground for prey. I have never seen a hawk from my house and expect I will never see one again once the ground is covered with concrete.

Now, every day I seem to notice a new "destruction" project somewhere in the metro mowing down trees and scraping the earth. Supposed improvements include sound barriers, wider roads and bridges, and office buildings. Every one of these sites now touches me personally-as I have my own wasteland growing larger every day. Yet, how blind I had been-just beyond the highway was the full enormity of the Lambert Airport Expansion. I had ignored it since it wasn't going to be close enough to affect me. Now, having my wood destroyed opened my eyes to the greater importance of all such green spaces.

There are a myriad of reasons to maintain open fields and small woods and to simply not develop every acre of our urban landscape. From heat sinks and windbreaks to noise buffers and privacy screens, many of those reasons are economical. But what does it say about us that a field, a plot of trees, or a pond is treated as a waste of space? We have to fight to create or maintain even urban parks. Undeveloped, unsculpted land is not seen as an end in itself, but is simply awaiting the right development plan. Are house sparrows, starlings, rabbits, and squirrels the accepted extent of our urban wildlife? Should we have to leave town or visit an all-too-rare conservation area to experience a bat, an owl, a tree frog, or a fox. We can demand more from our urban environment than factories and houses and highways.

None of these projects happen over night and all of them go through some type of community review. There are zoning and planning commissions in every community that must approve each one, and they have public meetings where your voice, and the voice of your neighbors, can make a difference. Also, every commission's members are either elected directly or responsible to other elected officials. If you are concerned about rampant development in our urban environment, please consider your vote carefully this November. Many voters, including myself, have often given little thought to local candidates, but on this issue they are key. If background information on the candidate is scarce, please take the time to contact their office, search out voter guides, or request position statements.

The destruction of my wood is nearly complete. The green trees and bird song, the fox den and squirrel chatter are all gone. In their place a moonscape of naked earth-the highway and airport are seen and heard just beyond. If you share my outrage over the loss of this and the many other green spaces in our communities, do not repeat my mistake. Let your voice be heard at planning and zoning meetings, and use your vote on November 5th to elect officials that share our concerns and can see a value in UNdeveloped land.

West Nile Virus Affecting Bird Populations

Jim Holsen

Throughout the spring and early summer it seemed that we could always find four or five crows in our front yard in Kirkwood. At times it was difficult to take our trash bags out to the curb at night -- the crows would break into them at dawn. Then, sometime around mid summer, the crows disappeared. And the blue jays that used to splash all of the water out of the bird bath also became scarce. Others throughout the metropolitan area report the same experience. Crows and jays disappeared from our yards as more deaths from West Nile virus appeared in our daily paper.

Perhaps the best confirmation of the effect of the virus on corvids (crows and jays) is from a survey conducted by Randy Korotev, a geologist at Washington University who is active in the Webster Groves Nature Study Society. Five years ago Randy conducted a bird census in Forest Park to mark the implementation of the Forest Park Master Plan. This year Randy repeated the census, starting at 7:00 a.m., as before, and stopping at exactly the same ten locations, where he observed and listened for five minutes at each point.

In 1997, Randy counted 12 blue jays and 11 American Crows. This year, he found not one Blue Jay and, although he saw no crows, he heard one and maybe one or two others. He repeated the count at the end of September and found 12 jays and no crows. Being close to the park, Randy makes almost daily counts in the park in the spring. He notes that in those walks crows were the species he encountered most frequently. He says he has still not seen a crow at home, at work, or in the park. He estimates the crow mortality in the Forest Park area to be greater than 95%. Randy and others think that the few jays and crows we see now are mostly migrants moving south from more northern climates.

What is surprising is that so little is known about the virus. First identified in the Western Hemisphere in 1999, it has now spread to 42 of the lower 48 states. It is known to affect some 120 bird species; some species, such as the corvids, suffer a

high mortality rate, while other species are carriers which transmit the disease but do not themselves become sick. Hawks and owls are said to be highly vulnerable, while species such as gulls and pigeons are said to be resistant to the virus. Many animals fit into similar categories. Complicating the problem, some 40 species of mosquitoes transmit the virus, all with varying feeding and breeding habits.

Dr. Frank Gill, National Audubon's vice president for science and a noted ornithologist, has called for an integrated approach to pest management -- advocating the elimination of mosquito breeding habitat, the use of environmentally sound tools to combat the insects, and a more targeted approach to the use of pesticides. Gill says that: "Communities can greatly enhance their ability to eliminate the threat of disease-carrying mosquitoes by replacing chemical larvacides with bacteria-based products, which kill mosquitoes, but not beneficial insects, such as dragonflies, amphibians, and fish that prey upon mosquitoes."

In a similar manner, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) advocates "source reduction," reducing breeding sites and killing mosquito larvae, and personal protection, wearing insect repellent and long sleeved clothing. Spraying is said to be relatively inefficient at eliminating mosquitoes because mosquitoes breed in only a few spoonfuls of water and can produce a new generation within 3 to 4 days. Insecticides kill only flying mosquitoes; those that are resting, perhaps the majority, are unharmed. Risks of spraying to both humans and wildlife are said to outweigh the limited benefits of spraying.

Some ornithologists are wondering about a new "silent spring." Will birds migrating to Central and South America carry the virus with them and will it decimate bird populations in those areas where wintering birds are concentrated? We just do not know enough to answer that question. Indications are that the virus, endemic to Africa, has moved into Europe several times and then retreated back to Africa. But some people suspect that now we may be dealing with a more virulent form of the virus -- we need more information.

Fall birding can be very Rewarding

Jim Malone

Hey, if you didn't go birding with us in September, you really missed out! The month of trips began with a visit to Tower Grove Park on the 8th. Our visit found TGP in the midst of the fall warbler migration. As a group we saw more than 10 species of warblers, including Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, Ovenbird and Canada Warbler, several thrushes, and even Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Our first Bird-n-Learn walk on the 14th gave a small but enthusiastic group a chance to investigate West St. Louis County's Little Creve Coeur Lake up close and personal. We talked a bit about the wetland residents and habitats, then went to nearby wetlands where we saw Common Yellowthroat, Red-winged Blackbird, Carolina Wren, Spotted, Semipalmated, Least, Pectoral, and Stilt Sandpipers, Coots, Sora, and even a Virginia Rail (and we got to play in the mud). Our last trip of the month was the annual Carlyle Lake Pelagic. This year's trip had 33 participants and netted a whopping 114 birds for the trip list. We started the day in Hazlett State park where we saw Grosbeaks, Tanagers, 15 species of warblers (including Bay-breasted, Blackpoll, Kentucky, and a late Cerulean). On our boat trip, we didn't see any Sabine's Gulls this year, but we did have Bonnaparte's and Franklin's Gulls, and Black, Least, Caspian, and Forster's terns. If these outings sounded like a good time to you, we have lots more in store. Come and join us!

November 9 (Saturday) Riverlands, 8:00 AM. One place where we spend much of our fall and winter birding time is Riverlands Environmental Demonstration area in West Alton, MO. This location typically has the greatest variety of Gulls, Ducks, Grebes, and Raptors, and now is the time when these birds begin returning for the winter. To get to the meeting location, take highway 367 North from I-270 past highway 94. Immediately before the approach to the Clarke Bridge, turn right at the gas station. Past the gas station, turn right at Wise Road. We will meet at the Teal Pond parking lot.

November 17 (Sunday) Busch Conservation Area, 8:00 AM. Busch Conservation area has a wealth of different habitats supporting waterfowl, passerines, raptors, sparrows, and others. The Fallen Oak nature trail feeders can have some of the best numbers of winter finches, woodpeckers, sparrows, and Red-breasted Nuthatches in the St. Louis area. This trip will focus on this area, the lakes, and other critical areas at Busch. To get to the meeting place, take I-64 West across the Missouri River. Turn South on highway 94 and travel about 1 mile to highway D. Turn right on D and go about 1.5 miles to the Busch entrance. Turn left at the "T" to Hampton Lake. Meet in the parking lot.

December 7 (Saturday) Riverlands, 1:00 PM. Most of the field trips we offer meet in the morning and last about 1/2 of the day. This is convenient, but we miss some of the best birds at Riverlands by not birding there in the afternoon and evening. As the afternoon passes, waterfowl and gulls move into the area to prepare for night. We will also look for Short-eared Owls which often spend the winter at Riverlands. They begin to get active at dusk and we will be there to look for them. For directions, see the above listing for this area. Enjoy the fall and winter birds by going on one or more of these birding trips. Birders of all experience levels are welcome, and we try to help those who need extra guidance and to be certain that everyone gets to see every bird.

Enjoy Life! Go Birding !!

Audubon Missouri Report

Mary Dueren

The state office is a very busy place these days. The Board of Trustees is in the final stretch of Strategic Planning. There are still some wrinkles to iron out. As of right now, all 14 chapters around the state of Missouri are reviewing an abstract. Final goals, timelines, and indicators are being applied. If you have ever gone through this process, it is hard work. This plan is being put together by all-volunteers from chapters around the state.

The great news announced September 30 is Andy Forbes has been hired as Director of Bird Conservation. This position will be funded initially by the Missouri Department of Conservation.

Andy describes himself as a lifelong birder. He grew up in Massachusetts and received his B.A. in Wildlife Biology and Management from the University of Rhode Island. He has extensive ornithological experience. By the way, his life list is now at 426 birds. He will start as Missouri's state Ornithologist in the Columbia, Missouri office on November 18.

If anyone has questions or concerns, please contact Mary Dueren at mdueren@swbell.net.



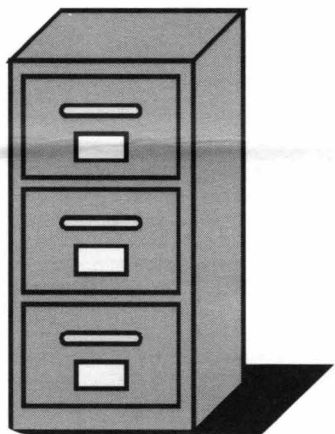
Holiday Open House

The Holiday Open House at Washington University's Tyson Research Center headquarters will feature a Book Fair. Books from the collections of Viola Buckholz and Jack Van Benthuyzen will be on sale during Sunday afternoon, Dec. 8 from 1-4pm. We'll begin the festivities for the 2002 Holiday Season by renewing friendships with conversation, delicious food and good books. Bring an appetizer or dessert and your best holiday spirit to share. Beverages will be provided.

Tyson Research Center will be open for hiking and birdwatching and is located on I-44 at the Antire Road exit. Follow the exit ramp to the gate on your right and sign in. The headquarters building is approximately one mile from the main road. Turn right into the parking area. See you there where the holidays begin.

Bird-n-Learn Sessions at Creve Coeur Park

Our second Bird-n-Learn walk at Creve Coeur park is coming up on November 23. This series of walks is a unique opportunity to visit a natural wetlands at three times throughout the year, and see how it changes with the seasons. We will be investigating the effects that weather, the seasons, and water levels have on these important areas. Come join us and learn how a real wetlands works, what problems we have maintaining them, and what we can do to help preserve these fragile environments for the future. To get to the event, take Creve Coeur Mill road North from Olive road onto the Missouri River Flood plain. We will meet in the brick building on the right side of the road (the former Hale Irwin Golf Center) at 8:00 AM. To reserve a space on this walk, call the County Parks Department reservation line at (314) 615-4FUN. There is a \$5 fee for the walk.



Office Space

We are in need of office space that is environmentally controlled and secure. If anyone has any ideas, please call Bill Salsgiver at 636-225-1490.

Hazardous Waste Drop Off

Dates and places for hazardous waste drop off in St. Louis County at the following web site:

http://www.stlouisco.com/doh/environ/recycler/fall_02_hhw.html

Tale Feathers

Tale Feathers is published monthly by the St. Louis Audubon Society. Messenger Printing prints 3,000 copies of each newsletter on recycled paper using soy ink. Anne Bolte edits the newsletter.

St. Louis Audubon Society 2002 - 2003

St. Louis Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
Kirkwood, MO 63122
Phone: 314-822-6595

Officers

President - Bill Salsgiver	636-225-1490
VP Education - Dale Ponce	636-394-6011
VP Conservation - Sue Gustafson	314-968-8128
VP Finance - Torrey Berger	314-579-9227
Treasurer - David Rabenau	314-968-8128
Seretary - Mary Smidt	636-227-6127

Board Members

Trish Abbene	636-527-0995
Mike Arduser	314-968-8479
Anne Bolte	314-832-0938
Robert Checkley	636-677-3897
Joe Eades	314-966-3171
Vicki Flier	314-968-9166
Mike Grant	636-519-0208
Dency Kahn	dency@swbell.net
Mitch Leachman	314-739-5112
Pat McCormick	
Sherry McCowan	
Mike Macek	
Jim Malone	636-536-1119
Jerry Miller	314-389-3969
Arthur Montgomery	314-822-1215
Sharon Nickl	636-391-8751
Dave Pierce	314-434-1651
John Solodar	314-862-5294

Get Published!

The deadline for the Dec issue is Nov 10. Please send articles, events and letters to Anne.

E-mail ambolte@swbell.net

phone 314.832.0938

post 6939 Sharp

St. Louis, MO 63116

St. Louis Audubon Society

P.O. Box 220227

St. Louis, Mo. 63122

Ph: 314.822.6595

www.stlouisaudubon.org



a member of Earth Share
of Missouri

NON-PROFIT
ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ST. LOUIS, MO.
PERMIT NO. 5128

This form makes you a member of **both** the National and St. Louis Audubon.

Audubon is a membership organization dedicated to protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Our members are the source of our volunteer strength and the foundation of our financial support. By becoming a member, you will receive National Audubon Society's magazine as well as the St. Louis Audubon Society newsletter, *Tale Feathers*.

St. Louis Audubon Society Membership Form

Membership category desired:

- ☐ Introductory / \$20
☐ Special two-year Introductory / \$30
☐ Sr. Citizen / Student / \$15
☐ Local Chapter / \$15 Make checks payable
to SLAS and send to above address

Send a check made out to:
National Audubon Society
P.O. Box 220227
St. Louis, Mo. 63122

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

N01 7XCH

Please support your local chapter. Use this form to join or renew.